Saskatchewan
Parks and
Renewable
Resources

Hon. Colin Maxwell
Minister

Parks Branch

Makwa Lake Provincial Park

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MAKWA LAKE PROVINCIAL

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT PARK

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Background

Initial recreation development in the Makwa Lake area was in the form of cottage subdivisions rather than public day-use or camping facilities. Cottages first appeared in the 1930's. The local branch of the Canadian Legion leased land from the Loon Lake Indian Band in 1933 at the extreme south end of Makwa Lake. It eventually became known as Longdo's Beach Resort.

In 1947 the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) surveyed lots for summer cottages on provincial crown land immediately west of this development. In 1948 another subdivision was surveyed by DNR on the southeast side of Little Jumbo Lake.

By 1949 a development plan was recommended for the entire area between the Loon Lake Indian Reserve and Jumbo Lake and the Loon Lake Board of Trade began agitating for a Provincial Park.

In 1956 DNR commissioned recreation consultant W.M. Baker to undertake a major study of the recreation potential of the northwest part of the province. Baker advised that the Makwa Lakes area contained some of the finest natural potential for public park developments in the region.

The Department of Natural Resources initiated public recreation development in the early 1960's, first at Pine Cove, then at the Meewasin Beach and Jumbo Beach sites.

By 1970, the Loon Lake Indian Band had taken back the administration of Longdo's Beach Resort. While the cottage subdivision on the Indian Reserve expanded, DNR concentrated upon development of public day-use and camping facilities. The major development of Stabler Point was initiated in 1971 and has continued with expansions in the late 1970's and 1980's.

Park Classification and Purpose

Provincial Parks are usually large areas of land and water where the high quality of the natural, historic and/or prehistoric resources combine to make the area provincially significant. Previously designated as a Recreation Site in 1984, it became apparent that the Makwa Lake Area should be designated as a Provincial Park; thus it was reclassified in 1986.

One of the major provisions of the Parks Act is to identify a classification of Provincial Parks. Four classes of Provincial Parks are now identified: Wilderness Parks; Natural Environment Parks; Recreation Parks and Historic Parks. As a new Natural Environment Park, Makwa Lake will be developed and used in a manner distinctly different from the other three classes of Provincial Parks.

The primary purposes of the Makwa Lake Provincial Park will be: (1) to protect representative landscape of this part of the province which displays a variety of ecological and geological characteristics and features (The

Thickwood Uplands Natural Region); (2) to provide a large tract of land which has high potential for a wide variety of recreational activities that are largely dependent upon the natural environment setting; and (3) to encourage a wide segment of the public to come to the park and to enjoy and experience the out-of-doors.

Location

Makwa Lake Provincial Park is located in Townships 58 and 59, Ranges 22 and 23, West of the Third Meridian. The park includes land on Makwa Lake, Little Jumbo Lake, Big Jumbo Lake, Perch Lake and Goose Lake, west of the village of Loon Lake. Loon Lake is located approximately 60 km west of Meadow Lake and 165 km north of North Battleford. Access to the Makwa Lakes area is via Highways 4 and 26 from North Battleford, Highways 17, 3 and 26 from Lloydminster, and Highways 55 or 3 from Prince Albert.

The northern sector of the park is located 8 km north of Loon Lake, west of Highway 26. The more developed southern sector of the park can be reached via provincial grid road #699 west of Loon Lake.

Size of Park

The Park is comprised of two segments. The smaller northern portion containing approximately 405 hectares (1000 acres), includes 8 kilometres (5 miles) of northern shoreline of Makwa Lake. The southern portion of the park is considerably larger, containing approximately 2,153 hectares (5,318 acres) of land with portions of the shorelines of Makwa, Little Jumbo, Big Jumbo, Perch and Goose Lakes.

With a total land area in excess of 2,550 hectares (6,300 acres), the Park is of sufficient size to meet the outdoor recreation needs of visitors as well as sustain and protect the natural environment.

Natural Features

During glacial periods, ice sheets moved southwesterly across the region. The resultant relief is almost entirely dependent upon inequalities in deposition and erosion of the glacial tills. A pattern of alternating hills, valleys, sloughs and plains is characteristic of the terrain except where the Missouri Coteau is evident.

The Makwa chain of lakes, lying at an elevation of 527 metres (1,720 feet) above sea level, is situated at the base of the Missouri Coteau face. Elevations on top of the Coteau (part of the Thickwood Uplands Natural Region of Saskatchewan) exceed 610 metres (2,000 feet), greatly enhancing the scenic qualities of the region.

The Makwa Lakes consist of six water bodies of varying sizes and shapes lying irregularly in a circular configuration. The six lakes, combined, cover an area of nearly 4,130 hectares (10,200 acres or 16 square miles) and have a total shoreline of nearly 95 km (60 miles).

Within the Makwa Lake Provincial Park only a few small sand beaches have developed naturally. Meewasin Beach, at the south end of Big Jumbo Lake, is one of the more attractive natural bathing beaches. Jumbo Beach, although fairly low in natural potential, is the most heavily used public beach in the Park. This beach is the most accessible one from the cottage subdivisions and is the most visible and accessible beach for tourists and day-visitors.

Makwa Lake and Upper Makwa Lake, with a combined area of 3,380 hectares (8,350 acres or 13 square miles) are of sufficient size to permit all forms of boating and sailing. The four smaller lakes in the chain, while too small for many larger boats, can be navigated by canoes and smaller boats at most times.

The higher elevations of the Thickwood Hills Uplands to the south of the Makwa Lakes as well as the morainic hills surrounding them, are covered by typical forest soils. They are generally not suitable for agriculture. Forestry, wildlife, outdoor recreation and nature appreciation are more appropriate land uses.

Trembling aspen and balsam poplar occupy the greatest area in the Makwa Lakes region, with trees up to 40 feet in height in many areas. Occasional stands of white spruce or white (paper) birch, are encountered.

Aspen is the dominant forest species due to the prevalence of fires in decades past. Climax species such as white spruce have not been able to succeed. Clumps of paper birch are sparsely distributed within the park area, but stands have not matured. Jack pine is fairly extensive in the sandy burnt-over areas, generally some distance from the lake shores. Black spruce, tamarack, willow and other bog/swamp species occur in the lower, poorly drained depressions. Hazelnut, alder, saskatoon, blueberry, buffalo berry, roses and grasses are also found where soil and climatic conditions are more favourable.

While the dominant forest cover in the area is trembling aspen, the variety provided by occasional stands of jack pine, white spruce, birch and the lowland/bog communities creates a pleasant and scenic environment around the chain of lakes and over the rolling terrain.

The most important fish species in the Makwa Lakes include lake whitefish, northern pike, yellow perch, walleye and lake cisco. Tourists and local visitors have been attracted to the chain of Makwa Lakes for angling since the lakes were first encountered. Angling pressures have reduced the size of the average fish taken, but 'success' has remained possible with continued management of the fishery resource. Commercial fishing has taken place in Makwa Lake periodically over the past 30 years with small catches of whitefish.

Wildlife species are numerous. Moose, white tailed and mule deer, black bear, coyotes, red fox, snowshoe hare, red squirrel and ruffed grouse are common. The gray wolf, lynx and woodland caribou may also extend southward into this region. Elk, once abundant in the area, were reintroduced by Saskatchewan Parks and Renewable Resources in 1985.

There is an abundant and diverse bird population because of the numerous productive nesting and breeding sites in the Makwa Lakes area. Migratory birds are also present during the spring and fall migration seasons. Geese, ducks, ruffed grouse, coots, snipes and common loons are present. The common loon is famous for its lonely, eery cries and wild laughter, especially in the spring breeding season. For many, the sounds of the loon signify northern forest recreation and wild lake country. Makwa Lake Provincial Park is fortunate to have such an interesting and beautiful bird to be named after: "Makwa" is the Cree word for Loon.

This great variety of wildlife is an extremely valuable recreation resource within the Makwa Lake Natural Environment Park because extensive forms of recreation activities such as hiking, cross-country skiing, canoeing, camping and nature appreciation are greatly enhanced by sightings of wildlife.

Great emphasis will be placed upon the protection and interpretation of the natural ecosystems represented within the Park. These features warranted the planned development and protective resource management associated with Provincial Natural Environment Park status.

History

On June 3, 1885, at the narrows between Upper Makwa Lake and Lower Tullibee Lake, the last military skirmish of the North West Rebellion took place. A provincial historic site, recently redesignated as a Provincial Historic Park, was first established at Steele Narrows in 1962. Grid road #699 now crosses the site of the narrows where the skirmish took place. The Historic Park has cairns, information panels and maps which give further details on the battle and personalities involved.

Other historical points of interest include the abandoned CN railway grade which extended from St. Walburg to Loon Lake. The eroded canyon and sand delta on the east side of Makwa Lake, on the Indian Reserve north of the Village of Loon Lake, is an interesting example of human impact on the natural environment.

Units of the Park

Makwa Lake Provincial Park has two separate and distinct units. The northern unit is less developed for recreational use, however it provides a direct visual contact with the excellent resources that lie west and south of Highway 26. This unit contains elements of the 1885 North West Rebellion including rifle pits and the trail of Chief Big Bear. The physiographic features are different from the southern unit where the edge of the higher Missouri Coteau and Thickwood Uplands are distinctly visible.

The southern unit of the Park contains the existing recreational developments of Jumbo Beach, Stabler Point and Meewasin Beach. The topographic relief of the southern unit is much greater than the northern unit, with forested rolling hills and intervening sloughs and expressions offering a greater

scenic variety. The presence of spruce, jack pine, birch and other species adds to the interest of the aspen forests. Wildlife populations and the accessibility to five lakes are significant features of this unit. The abandoned CN Railway grade can be utilized to advantage for interpretation of cultural impacts on the natural environment and to provide access to the back-country areas of the park.

Available Facilities

Development of public facilities within the southern unit of the park includes three distinct areas: Stabler Point (the main campground and day-use area), Jumbo Beach and Meewasin Beach.

The main public development has taken place at Stabler Point, on the west side of Little Jumbo Lake. The 220 unit campground (93 sites electrified) is served by two public beaches, one on each side of the point. The north facing beach is used extensively for swimming and beach oriented activities. The south facing beach is used mainly for boat launching and docking. A modern campground service centre is centrally located.

The Jumbo Beach Campground, adjacent to the main access road along the east side of Little Jumbo Lake, has limited facility development. Water, toilets, camp kitchen, and parking lot serve the 18 unit campground along the lakeshore. A modern changehouse equipped with running water and toilet facilities and picnic facilities is located in the nearby Jumbo Beach day-use area.

The Meewasin Beach Campground at the south end of Big Jumbo lake has only limited camping and day-use facilities. A camp kitchen and toilets are located central to twelve campsites. A small parking area and unserviced change house and picnic area are provided behind the excellent swimming beach. Fifteen kilometres of cross-country ski trails are located south and east of Big Jumbo Lake: Birch Trail (4.8 km), Alder Trail (4.6 km) Pine Trail (3.2 km) and Poplar Trail (2.4 km).

Recreation Use and Trends

Visitation to the Makwa Lake Area increased over forty precent over the past decade, 1976-1985. In 1984, of all park lands in the province, Makwa Lake ranked eleventh in use. Campground use increased slowly but steadily over this same period, (from 27,600 camper days in 1976 to 35,212 camper days in 1985).

Most of the area's attractiveness in the past was related to water-oriented activities (fishing, swimming, boating, canoeing) but a number of associated land-based facilities have been added or have potential to be added (camping, picnicking, scenic viewing, hiking, nature interpretation, cross-country skiing).

During the 1950's and 60's because of better access to the recreation areas of Prince Albert National Park, Emma Lake, and Christopher Lake, the residents of Prince Albert and Saskatoon made use of these recreation areas. However, highway improvements throughout the Makwa Lake area have made these cities as well as Lloydminster, North Battleford and Edmonton much more accessible to the Makwa Lake area. Heavy oil development in the Cold Lake, Alberta and Lloydminster-North Battleford regions will result in a larger market area population in the future. The Yellowhead Highway and its increasing volume of tourist traffic is also now within the market area of Makwa Lake Provincial Park.

Increased use and visitation normally follows designation as a Provincial Park. Improved services to the campgrounds and day-use areas will also prove more attractive to visitors, encouraging them to come more often or stay longer.

Considering the size of the Park and the accessibility of a number of lakes, the resources are capable of satisfying additional recreational demands. Summer use is currently limited more by lack of services and promotion than by the resource base itself. While winter recreation will continue to grow in popularity, the summer season will continue to be the dominant period of use.

Resource Use and Trends

The long term potential of the area for park and recreation purposes has been recognized for some time but concerns over potential conflicts in use of the non-renewable and renewable resources needed to be resolved. Activities contributing to land use conflicts included fishing, hunting, trapping, grazing and sand extraction. There was also concern for the forest resources and their potential importance for pulp harvesting, wildlife habitat, recreation and watershed management.

With designation of a Recreation Site initially and now a Provincial Natural Environment Park and with corresponding land use zoning and proper management, all of these conflicts should be properly resolved. With a Natural Environment classification, special consideration will be given to protecting those natural resources which are characteristic of the ecology of the area. Characteristic geographical, geological, or biological features which are of special public value or interest, will not be jeopardized by resource extraction activities.

While the protection of the natural environment will be a primary objective of the Makwa Lake Provincial Park, the public will be encouraged to visit the park and to experience and enjoy the out-of-doors in all seasons. More intensive uses will be permitted only where the resources can withstand the use.

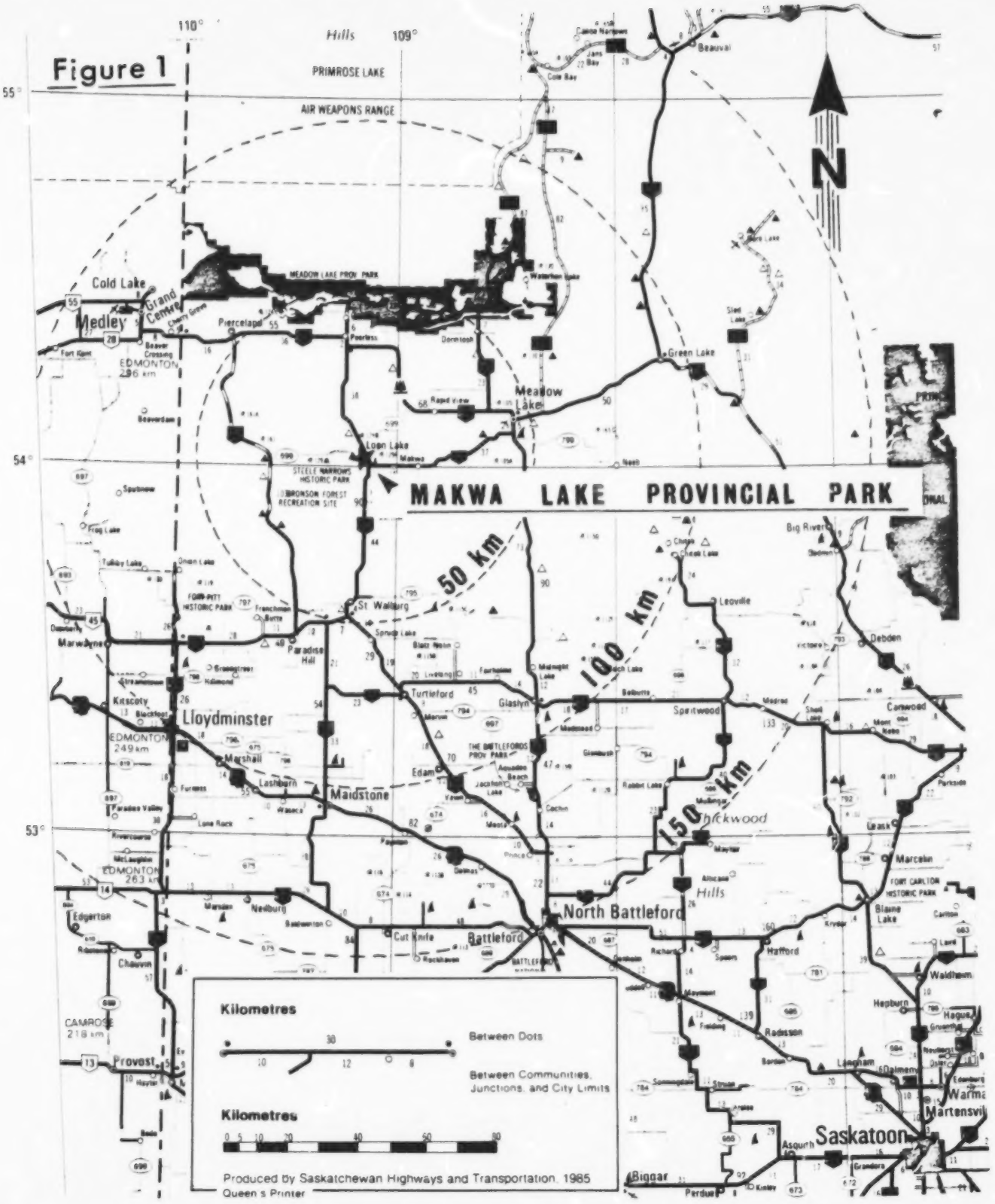
Benefits of the Provincial Park

Makwa Lake Provincial Park will ensure the protection of suitable representative portions of the natural environment of the area. The northern portion of the park, though seemingly less attractive from an outdoor recreation viewpoint, is important for protection of the northern lakeshore environment and wildlife habitat. It will serve as a buffer between the lake and cultural impacts of agriculture, transportation and human settlement. The southern unit will protect representative portions of the Thickwood Uplands Natural Region of the province as well as scenically attractive features such as the edge of the Missouri Coteau, the rolling morainic hills, the mixed wood forest and the smaller lakes and depressional areas. Both units of the park will ensure future public access to and enjoyment of the lakes in the area.

Interpretation of the environment, including the native flora and fauna, as well as geologic, historic and cultural features within the Park and elsewhere in the region, will add to the visitor's appreciation and understanding of the Park and add significantly to the quality of their experience.

This Provincial Park will benefit the entire population of west central Saskatchewan in terms of ensuring quality out-of-doors recreational experiences in both summer and winter. The combined Bronson Forest-Makwa Lake-Meadow Lake park land areas and region can have a very significant appeal for visitors if services and facilities are developed to acceptable levels. The total region has the natural potential to become an important attraction on a national scale and make Makwa Lake Provincial Park a natural place for tourists to visit for short or extended periods of time. The improvements and promotion associated with its new Provincial Park status will benefit the economy of the entire Makwa Lake region.

Figure 1


110°
109°
55°
54°
53°
Hills
PRIMROSE LAKE
AIR WEAPONS RANGE
N
MAKWA LAKE PROVINCIAL PARK
50 km
100 km
150 km
MEADOW LAKE PROV. PARK
Cold Lake
Grand Centre
Medley
Beauval
Green Lake
Meadow Lake
Loon Lake
STEELE NARROWS HISTORIC PARK
BRONSON FOREST RECREATION SITE
St. Walburg
Paradise Hill
Marwayne
Lloydminster
Kitscoty
Turtleford
Glaslyn
Leoville
Big River
Spiritwood
Debden
Canwood
Marshall
Lashburn
Maidstone
Edam
THE BATTLEFORDS PROV. PARK
Hickwood
Marcelin
North Battleford
Battleford
Cut Knife
Edgerton
Chauvin
Provost
Hafford
Radisson
Waldheim
Saskatoon
Asquith
Biggar
Perdue
EDMONTON 296 km
EDMONTON 249 km
EDMONTON 263 km
CAMROSE 218 km
Kilometres
Between Dots
Between Communities, Junctions, and City Limits
Kilometres
Produced by Saskatchewan Highways and Transportation. 1985
Queen's Printer

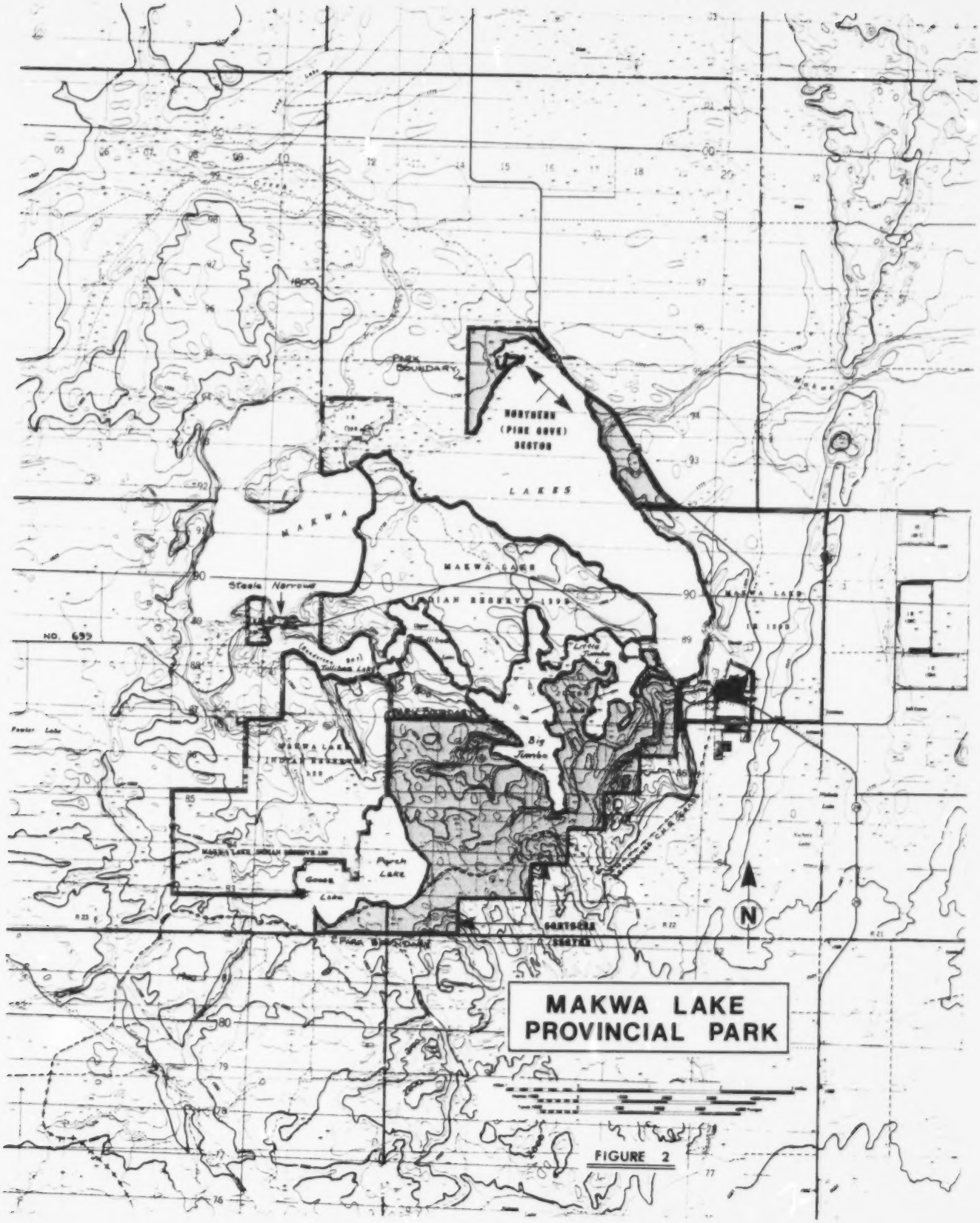

MAKWA LAKE
PROVINCIAL PARK
N
NORTHERN
(PINE GROVE)
SECTOR
PARK
BOUNDARY
LAKES
MAKWA
MAKWA LAKE
Steele Narrows
NO. 699
Big
Jumbo
Perch
Lake
Goose
Lake
SOUTHERN
SECTOR

FIGURE 2